

Message Text

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TAGS AS, PFOR

SUBJ: TASMANIAN BY-ELECTION

REF: CANBERRA 3612

1. CONGEN AND LABATT HAVE CONDUCTED QUICK TELEPHONE SURVEY OF TASMANIAN POLITICAL LEADERS REGARDING PROSPECTS FOR JUNE 28 BY-ELECTION TO ELECT NEW REPRESENTATIVE FROM BASS DI TRICT AROUND LAUNCESTON, TASMANIA, TO REPLACE FORMER DEFENCE MINISTER LANCE BARNARD. WE WILL CONTINUE SUCH SURVEY IN FURTHER TELEGRAMS.

2. MAX BINGHAM, OPPOSITION LIBERAL PARTY LEADER IN TASMANIAN STATE PARLIAMENT, TOLD CONGEN JUNE 4
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THAT HE EXPECTS HIS PARTY TO TAKE BARNARD'S SEAT

FROM ALP. LIBERAL CANDIDATE KEVIN NEWMAN, IS 41 YEAR OLD RECENTLY RETIRED ARMY LT COLONEL WHO ACCORDING TO BINGHAM HAS ALREADY ESTABLISHED HIMSELF FIRMLY IN LAUNCESTON, HAS HAD GOOD PUBLICITY, AND IN WHOSE SUPPORT "WHOLE OF NATIONAL PARTY LEADERSHIP WILL BE COMING TO LAUNCESTON TO CAMPAIGN." HOWEVER DESPITE BY-ELECTION BINGHAM IS STICKING TO PREVIOUS PLANS FOR LEAVING TODAY ON EXTENDED TRIP TO U.S., CANADA AND EUROPE AND CAMPAIGN DIRECTION WILL BE HANDLED BY HIS DEPUTY OPPOSITION LEADER, WILLIAM BEATTIE, LAUNCESTON MEMBER OF STATE PARLIAMENT.

3. MR. KATHERINE VENN, TASMANIAN STATE SECRETARY OF LABOR PARTY TOLD LABATT SAME DAY THAT SUDDENT NEED TO SELECT NOMINEE FOR BARNARD SEAT HAS CAUGHT PARTY IN SOME DISARRAY. WHILE LABOR PARTY FIRMLY CONTROLS TASMANIAN GOVT IT HAS PASSED THROUGH WHOLE SERIES OF CRISES IN PAST 12 MONTHS, HAVING HAD TO FILL FIVE SUDDEN VACANT SEATS IN STATE LEGISLATURE AND BARELY AVOIDING SERIOUS SPLIT BETWEEN MODERATES AND LEFT-WING OVER RESIGNATION OF LONG-TIME POPULAR LABOR PREMIER, ERIC REECE. ALP NOW FACING UNDER UNTESTED LEADERSHIP OF NEW PREMIER NEILSEN PROBLEM OF UNIFYING PARTY FOR JUNE 28 CONTEST. MOST LIKELY ALP CANDIDATE, ACCORDING TO MRS VENN, IS MRS P.W. JAMES, 42-YEAR OLD LAUNCESTON BASED SECRETARY TO BARNARD. WHILE POLITICAL PUNDITS SEEM TO FAVOR JIM BRASSIL, BARNARD'S FIRST SECRETARY IN HIS CANBERRA OFFICE, MRS VENN POINTS OUT THAT BRASSIL IS RESIDENT OF MELBOURNE (ALTHOUGH BINGHAM SAYS HE HAS A HOUSE NEAR LAUNCESTON) AND IS THEORETICALLY BARRED BY LOCAL TASMANIAN PARTY RULES FROM SEEKING NOMINATION. MRS VENN ALSO SAYS THERE ARE SEVERAL "DARK HORSE" ALP CANDIDATES, EXPECTED TO SURFACE BEFORE SPECIAL PARTY NOMINATING CONFERENCE AT LAUNCESTON, SUNDAY, JUNE 8TH.

4. MEDIA JUNE 5 CARRIED ANNOUNCEMENT OF CANDIDACY BY REG TURNBULL, FORMER SENATOR FROM LAUNCESTON, WHO STATES HE WILL RUN AS INDEPENDENT. ALSO BINGHAM CONFIRMED TO CONGEN THAT NATIONAL COUNTRY PARTY (NCP) IS PLANNING TO RUN WILLIAM CASAMATY AS CANDIDATE AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO HAVE QUEEENSLAND PREMIER BJELKE-PETERSEN CAMPAIGN FOR HIM.

5. COMMENT: UNTIL ALP ANNOUNCES CANDIDATE, ODDS SEEM TO FAVOR LIBERAL CANDIDATE, WHO SO FAR, ENJOYS COMPLETE AND UNIFIED BACKING FROM HIS PARTY, AND WHO HAS BEEN ACTIVELY CAMPAIGNING SINCE HIS PRE-SELECTION SOME WEEKS AGO. CONGEN OFFICERS NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT NCP CASAMATY

WILL UNDOUBTEDLY DRAW MOST VOTES FROM LIBERAL PARTY
RATHER FROM LABOR, ALTHOUGH BAINGHAM SAYS NEWMAN
WILL PROFIT FROM HIS SECOND PREFERENCE VOTES. BINGHAM'S
OWN ABSENCE IN U.S. SEEMS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND,
ESPECIALLY SINCE HE TOLD CONGEN; "IF WE CAN'T WIN THIS
ONE, WE ARE IN TROUBLE". HOWEVER, HE IS COUNTING ON
FEDERAL LEADERSHIP TO FIGHT THIS ONE OUT. LIBERAL
FAILURE WOULD CERTAINLY JAR LIBERAL HOPES AND HELP
REPAIR BADLY BRUISED LABOR IMAGE.

6. GENEVA: PLEASE PASS ILO DELEGATION.
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